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Banff National Park
MANAGEMENT PLAN SUMMARY

November, 1988

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Contents

FOREWORD

Page

1 INTRODUCTION 2

2 THE PARK CONCEPT 3

Land Use Zoning 5

Zone I — Special Preservation
Zone II — Wilderness
Zone III — Natural Environment
Zone IV — Outdoor Recreation
Zone V — Park Services
Land Use Zoning Map

Environmentally Sensitive Sites 8

3 PLAN DECISIONS 9

Protection and Management of Heritage Resources 9

Vegetation and Fire Management
Wildlife Management
Fisheries Management
Cultural Resources

Visitor Understanding, Appreciation and Enjoyment 11

Backcountry Opportunities and Facilities
Day Use Facilities and Services
Recreational Activities
Frontcountry Accommodation
Access
Lake Louise Visitor Centre
The Town of Banff

Communication Services 17

Support Facilities 17

Regional Integration 18

4 ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT 19

5 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY 20

Mount Rundle.

Canada's National Park system began in 1885 with the establishment of the 26 square kilometre Rocky Mountains Park.

Larch Valley.

The management plan reflects the significance of the park's World Heritage Site status, striking a delicate balance between preservation and use.

Foreword

Visited by millions annually, Banff National Park is the birthplace of the national parks system. Today, the preservation of its pristine beauty and wilderness is one of the great challenges facing the Canadian Parks Service. Based on the direction provided by *In Trust for Tomorrow: A Management Framework for Four Mountain Parks*, the *Banff Park Management Plan* meets that challenge by striking a delicate balance between preservation and use. The plan represents an environmentally sensitive approach to park management and reflects the park's World Heritage Site status.

This summary presents the major decisions contained in the Management Plan, which will guide park managers for the next 15 years. Public involvement in the planning program has been extensive. Consultation has played an important part in addressing a number of contentious issues, such as the future of the Banff airfield, and the establishment of the level of development appropriate within the park. Although many divergent views were expressed efforts have been made to reconcile differing perspectives within the statutory mandate outlined in the *National Parks Act*.

I want to thank the many people who helped contribute to the plan through their presentations, letters and participation at meetings. Such interest ensures that Banff National Park will be managed in a way that meets the high expectations of Canadians.

Tom McMillan, P.C., M.P.
Minister of the Environment

1 INTRODUCTION

The Four Mountain Parks Planning Program, begun in 1981, has been the most complex and high-profile program of its type in the Canadian national park system. The program was committed from the beginning to extensive public consultation. The first stage of the program was the completion of a comprehensive ecological inventory and evaluation of natural resources in all four parks.

The next key stage was the production of *In Trust for Tomorrow: A Management Framework for Four Mountain Parks.* This document, the result of almost four years of planning in cooperation with many interest groups, concerned citizens and other government agencies, then served as the basis for preparing detailed management plans for each of the four parks.

Public consultation has been an important component of the planning process.

Peyto Lake Viewpoint.

Resource protection will take precedence, where conflicts occur, over visitor use and facility development.

This summary of the management plan for Banff National Park outlines the way in which the park will be managed during the next 15 years. Banff, in common with the other mountain national parks, cannot be planned as an island separated from the surrounding provincial lands. Therefore, the plan identifies a number of important initiatives which will benefit both the park and the adjacent provincial areas.

A key issue addressed by the plan is the tension between resource protection and visitor use. The guiding principle is clear: wherever conflicts occur between resource protection and increased use and development, protection will take precedence.

The plan also addresses significant issues such as the appropriate levels of use and development in the ecologically important lower Bow Valley, the role and general size of the town of Banff, and the requirement to improve the quality of specific visitor facilities and services both along park roads and in backcountry areas.

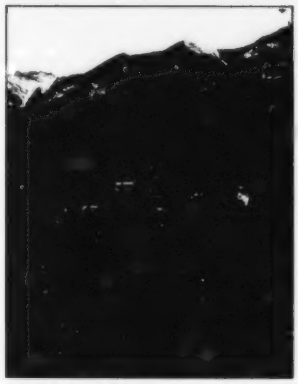
In developing this plan, the Canadian Parks Service took into consideration the thoughts and concerns of people across the country as well as the advice of all levels of government. The public's comments were gathered through mail-outs, open houses, workshops, both public and invitation-only meetings and meetings hosted by special interest groups.

The complete park management plan is available for public review at many libraries in British Columbia and Alberta, as well as offices of the Canadian Parks Service. If you wish to review the complete plan and are uncertain of how or where to find a copy, call or write the Public Consultation Coordinator for the western national parks at:

520 - 220, 4th Avenue S.E.,
Calgary, Alberta,
T2P 3H8
(403-292-4401)

2 THE PARK CONCEPT

Banff, one of Canada's best known and most frequently visited national parks, is the birthplace of the Canadian national parks system. Thermal springs at the Cave and Basin and elsewhere on Sulphur Mountain were the focus of a 26 square kilometre park reserve and resort centre that was established in 1885 and later served as the nucleus of an expanding system. Today, along with Jasper, Kootenay and Yoho, Banff forms the 20,160 square kilometre block of land known as the Four Mountain Parks. Banff itself covers 6,641 square kilometres—sharing its northernmost boundary with Jasper and portions of its western boundary with Yoho and Kootenay national parks. These parks, as well as Waterton Lakes National Park, protect and preserve a representative cross-section of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. In 1984 the Four Mountain Parks were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in recognition of their outstanding natural beauty, their diversity of vegetation and wildlife, and their exceptional examples of glaciation, canyon formations and karst features.



Banff Springs Hotel.

Banff is an internationally renowned tourist destination. Tourism initiatives which are in harmony with the National Park's mandate will continue to be supported.

There are both positive and negative aspects to Banff's role as Canada's oldest and one of the world's best-known national parks. Millions of visitors enjoy the park annually, but this amount of use has led to a cumulative level of development over the past 103 years that is unusual in a national park setting. Fortunately, the park's long tradition as a protected area means it has a devoted constituency of visitors who enjoy the available facilities but who are also conscious of the need for judicious stewardship. The plan will help ensure that opportunities to enjoy the park's natural splendour will still be available at its bicentennial.

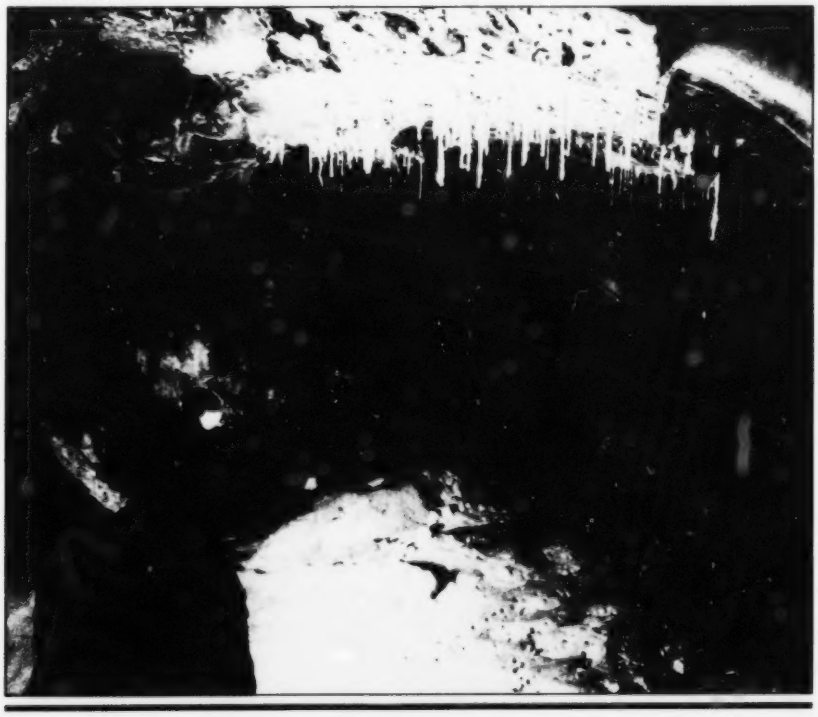
The principles forming the basis for the plan's general framework are summarized below:

- Protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources will take precedence wherever conflicts occur between visitor use and facility development. A priority will be placed on protecting the montane areas of the lower Bow Valley, the karst features in the Castleguard caves, the Sulphur Mountain thermal springs (notably an area called the Middle Springs) and woodland caribou and grizzly bear populations.
- In recognition of the park's already extensive infrastructure, the plan favours expansion and upgrading of existing facilities in disturbed areas; any new facilities will be concentrated in existing nodes rather than dispersed along the park's road system.

The plan includes initiatives which will better integrate park management with the management of adjacent lands.

- The rehabilitation of man-disturbed areas will be a priority.
- The Canadian Parks Service recognizes Banff National Park as an important tourist destination, and will encourage tourism initiatives which are in concert with the fundamental mandate to maintain national parks unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.
- The Canadian Parks Service will also continue to provide a variety of core services such as campgrounds and interpretive services and will work closely with the private sector in the planning and development of other appropriate facilities and services.
- The quality of appropriate visitor experiences will be improved with special consideration given to the diversity of interests, ages, skills and capabilities found among park visitors.
- Upgraded and expanded communication services will be developed to better inform visitors of the range of opportunities available in the park. These communication services will also foster appreciation for the park's heritage resources.

The Castleguard Cave Zone I area protects rare karst features.



- Banff will continue to be a good neighbour by establishing more cooperative and consultative programs with appropriate government agencies, tourism industry interests and local municipalities in the surrounding region.
- The plan contains recognition that limits to the future growth and development of the Banff townsite region must be established. Due to the region's high level of use and development, the focus will be on heritage resource protection. Development outside the Town's boundaries will be restricted, and wherever possible, the repair of existing environmental disturbances will be given priority. Additional facilities and services required by park visitors or residents will be located either outside the park or within the Town boundaries.
- The Icefields Parkway will continue to be managed to maintain its status as an internationally-acclaimed sightseeing route. The natural and aesthetic quality of the corridor will be enhanced by rehabilitating man-made disturbances, such as abandoned road alignments and borrow pits, and by minimizing the visual impact of park facilities. Visitors travelling along the parkway will be provided with year-round opportunities to use, enjoy and learn about the spectacular natural landscape.
- Approximately 93 per cent of the park will be managed to provide backcountry opportunities and to protect the ecology. In these areas a full range of recreational opportunities will continue to be provided but greater emphasis will be placed on ensuring that traditional wilderness (or wildland) opportunities are not eroded. The experiences of backcountry visitors will also be improved by generally upgrading existing park facilities and by reducing conflicts between user groups.
- The Canadian Parks Service will manage the Four Mountain Parks consistently, with emphasis on those activities which directly benefit visitors, including backcountry restrictions and regulations as well as the provision of information about specific recreational opportunities.

Land Use Zoning

Land use zoning is used to establish the desired level of protection, use and facility development on specific park lands. There are five land use zones in the system employed by the Canadian Parks Service. The following map shows how this zoning is applied in Banff National Park.

Zone I— Special Preservation

Unique, rare or endangered features are found in these areas, and as a result, public access is strictly controlled. Four percent of the park, in four separate areas, requires special preservation. These areas are:

- *the Clearwater-Siffleur area*, which contains several important features— the range of Alberta's southernmost Woodland caribou herd; the hoodoos; areas of permafrost; rare plant and animal species; prehistoric cultural sites; elk and bighorn sheep ranges; and wolf and grizzly habitat.
- the internationally significant *Castleguard Cave system and meadows.*
- *the Cave and Basin Marsh.*
- *the Christensen archaeological site* along the Bow Valley Parkway, which contains at least nine separate periods of human occupation, the earliest dated at 8,000 years ago.

The management plan calls for further research to determine the significance and sensitivity of park resources and to develop comprehensive, ecologically-based management strategies to ensure their preservation. Additional Zone I areas may be designated as a result of these studies. However, any major changes to the zoning will require a formal plan amendment and public participation.

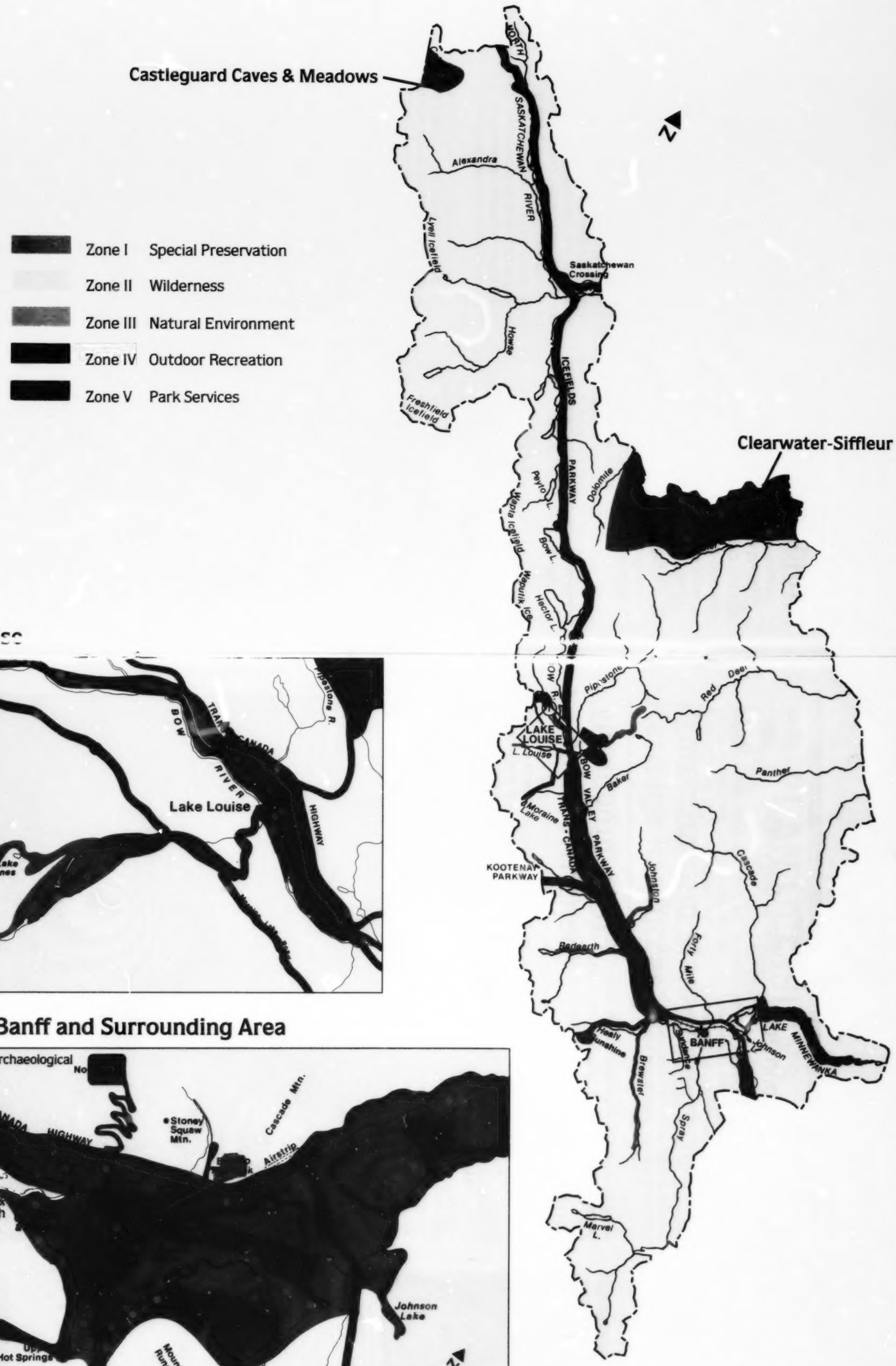
Zone II— Wilderness

Approximately 93 per cent of the park will be managed as wilderness. Banff, along with Jasper, will continue to provide most of the large wilderness areas in the Four Mountain Parks. These are extensive areas that represent the natural history themes of the park; much of this land consists of steep mountain slopes, glaciers and lakes. Zone II areas cannot support high levels of visitor use and facility development; limits, therefore, may be placed on the number of users and no motorized access will be permitted. Furthermore, man-made development will be restricted to trails, backcountry campgrounds and primitive shelters. Exceptions will be permitted only for basic activities and facilities associated with park administration, resource management and public safety. Areas more suitable for facility development and recreational use are designated as Zone III, IV or V.

It is the intention of the Canadian Parks Service to proceed with the designation of legislated wilderness areas on the basis of the park land use zoning plan. All identified Zone II lands and appropriate Zone I lands within them will be recommended for Order-In-Council designation as wilderness areas. This will have the effect of defining these areas by government regulation and preventing any level of development beyond that required for providing essential services and ensuring the protection of park resources.

Ninety-three percent of the park will be managed as Zone II— Wilderness.

Land-Use Zoning, Banff National Park



Zone III— Natural Environment

About one per cent of the park falls into this transition between Zone II— Wilderness and Zone IV— Outdoor Recreation. Low density outdoor recreational activities and modest visitor facilities, such as backcountry lodges, are allowed in this zone. Non-motorized access is preferred, although public transit is permitted.

Zone III— Natural Environment allows existing backcountry accommodation, such as Skoki Lodge.

Zone IV— Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation zones accommodate a broad range of recreational opportunities and facilities that are compatible with the natural landscape. About one per cent of the park is Zone IV— Recreation. It includes the right-of-ways along the Trans-Canada Highway and park roads, as well as recreational facilities where motorized public access is permitted. Zone IV developments exist at Lake Minnewanka and Moraine Lake and at the Mount Norquay, Sunshine Village and Lake Louise ski areas.

Zone V— Park Services

The town of Banff and the Lake Louise Visitor Centre are the Zone V areas, covering less than one per cent of the park. The *Banff Town Plan* and the 1982 *Lake Louise Action Plan* will guide land use within these community boundaries.

Environmentally Sensitive Sites

The Environmentally Sensitive Sites (ESS) designation is applied to areas containing significant and sensitive heritage resource features that require special protection. Unlike Zone I areas, an ESS can accommodate relatively high levels of controlled visitor activity without jeopardizing its resource values. The Vermilion Lakes wetlands and the Middle Springs on Sulphur Mountain are the two ESSs in the park. Strategies to manage both heritage resources and visitor activities will be developed for these sites.

Zone IV— Outdoor Recreation comprises one percent of the park and includes transportation corridors and recreation areas where motorized access is permitted.

3 PLAN DECISIONS

Protection and Management of Heritage Resources

Banff contains features representative of the Main and Front ranges of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. All natural and cultural features contained in the park are important and are, therefore, protected.

The international reputation of the Four Mountain Parks and their World Heritage status places a unique responsibility on the Canadian Parks Service as the steward of these spectacular landscapes. The boundaries of Banff National Park were not established along ecological boundaries. As a result, proper management of its natural resources requires close cooperation with federal, provincial and private managers of adjacent lands.

The plan's highlights relating to the protection and management of heritage resources are outlined in the next few pages.

Grizzly Bear.

Unique, rare or endangered species and those sensitive to human activities will be given the greatest possible protection.

Vegetation and Fire Management

Special attention will be given to the protection of montane areas in the lower Bow Valley. These areas contain significant vegetation types such as grasslands, Douglas fir, aspen and white spruce forest communities. Methods of managing and protecting montane areas will be developed and implemented.

The issues associated with forest fires generated considerable public interest. The park follows a program of wildfire suppression in cooperation with the other national parks and the British Columbia and Alberta forest services. Nevertheless, fire is a natural ecological process, and the success of the fire suppression program has adversely altered the park's ecological balance. Therefore, the important role of fire will now be recognized in managing the park's forests. In some cases, fires will be set under controlled situations. Park facilities and neighbouring lands will be protected from all fires.

Controlled Burn.

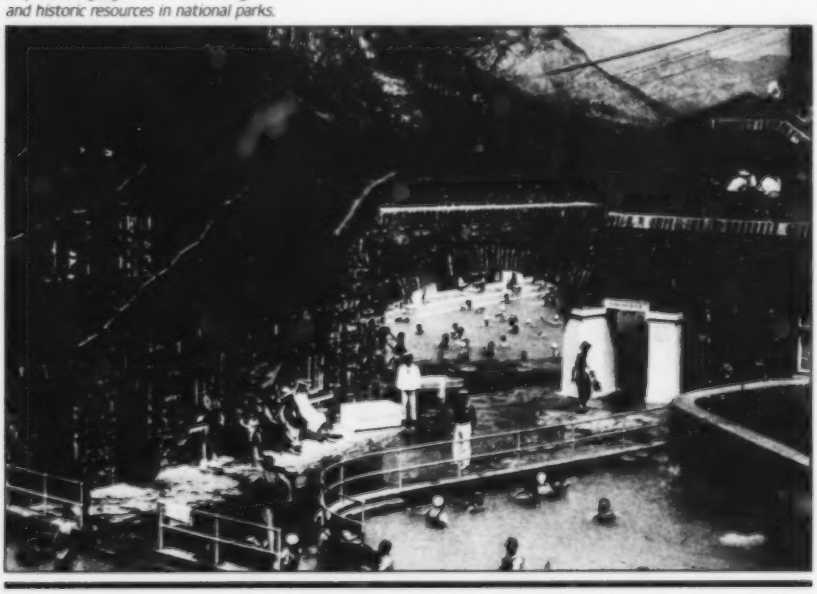
The re-introduction of fire into the ecosystem helps maintain vegetative diversity and improved wildlife habitat.

Wildlife Management

The management of caribou, grizzly bear, wolves, cougar and predatory birds will receive special attention. Areas that are particularly important to wildlife survival will be protected, including the lower Bow Valley and the Clearwater-Siffleur areas. The Canadian Parks Service will also develop cooperative programs with the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia to manage wildlife species migrating across the park's boundaries. *Reducing the stress on wildlife caused by the Trans-Canada Highway, the Canadian Pacific Railway's main rail line and the park's own roads will continue to be a priority.*

The Cave and Basin.

The Canadian Parks Service is committed to protecting significant archaeological and historic resources in national parks.



Fisheries Management

Sport fishing will be managed to ensure the protection of aquatic ecosystems and the maintenance of viable native fish populations. Catch limits and seasonal closures will remain the primary tools for managing sport fishing in the park. A limited program of fish stocking may continue.

Cultural Resources

The national parks mandate includes the protection and preservation of not only natural resources, but also features of archaeological and historical importance. A cultural resource management program will be developed. The policies of the Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office will be strictly followed. The Canadian Parks Service will also comply with the spirit of the *Alberta Historic Resources Act* in its protection of buildings designated by the Act within the park.

Although a detailed inventory and assessment of the park's cultural resources has not been completed, a number of nationally significant archaeological sites have been identified in the Bow Valley, including the Christensen site and various sites fronting the Vermilion Lakes wetlands. The park also contains historic resources of local, regional and national significance. For example, seven National Historic Sites are protected, including the Cave and Basin, the Banff Park Museum, the Sulphur Mountain Cosmic Ray Station and Howse Pass.

The Canadian Parks Service is committed to protecting historic resources of park significance and will seek the help of local residents in its efforts to preserve the heritage character of these structures.

Visitor Understanding, Appreciation and Enjoyment

Banff is a year-round national park. Over eight million people enter the park each year—travelling from the east and west along the Trans-Canada Highway, from Jasper along the Icefields Parkway, and from Kootenay National Park on the Kootenay Parkway (Highway 93). About one-half of these visitors drive straight through; the remainder stop for periods of a few hours to many days of enjoyment. Most use and facilities are centred at the town of Banff, the Lake Louise Visitor Centre, and along the Trans-Canada Highway and Icefields Parkway.

The Canadian Parks Service gives special recognition to the important role played by Banff and the other mountain national parks in the tourism industry of both Alberta and British Columbia; this management plan provides direction for a variety of tourism industry related initiatives. These include the development of coordinated marketing programs, the physical upgrading of visitor facilities and the provision of high quality recreational opportunities. In particular, the Canadian Parks Service emphasizes the development of recreational activities that depend on Banff's natural resources and require a minimum of man-made facilities. The Canadian Parks Service will provide more opportunities for disabled and elderly park visitors.

The future demand for recreational opportunities is difficult to anticipate because of the unpredictable nature of several factors: developments in the region surrounding the park, fluctuations in foreign rates of exchange, changes in tourism and recreation patterns, and the manner in which tourism is marketed. Therefore, the plan provides for a range of responses to any significant change in demand.

At present, visitor use is declining at some of the park's facilities, including a number of the road-accessible and backcountry campgrounds and the upper Sulphur Mountain Hotpool.

The Canadian Parks Service will engage in market-oriented planning programs for under-utilized facilities but will make no extraordinary attempt to stimulate increased use of existing well-used facilities or to promote new types of visitor use.

The management plan contains direction for five major types of visitor activities. The highlights of the recommendations for each of these areas are described below.

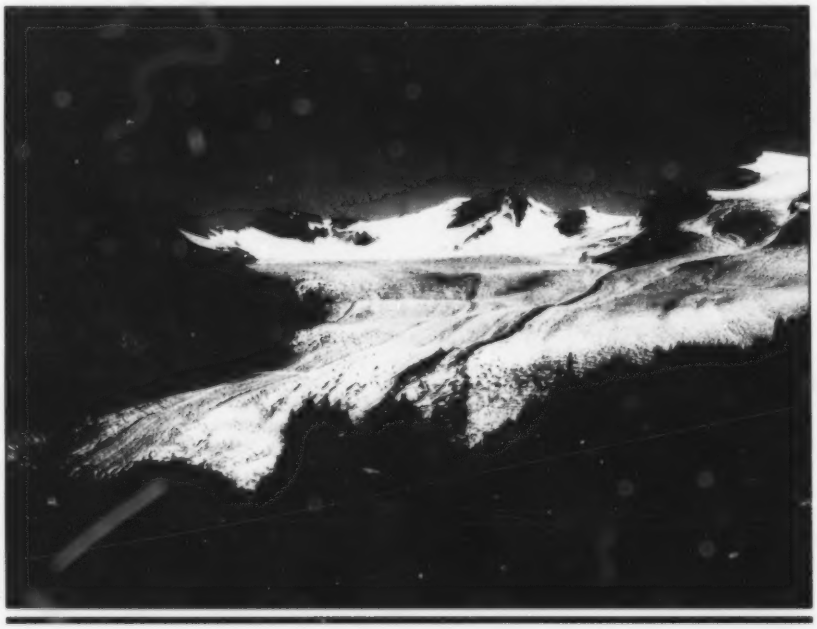
Backcountry Opportunities and Facilities

Most of Banff National Park will be managed as Zone II—Wilderness. Day-trips into these backcountry areas are a popular visitor activity. About 20,000 visitors stay overnight in the backcountry each year: about 13 per cent at commercial outfitter camps and lodges and the rest at backcountry campgrounds, trail shelters or alpine huts.

Plain of Six Glaciers Teahouse.

A wide range of backcountry opportunities will be provided.

Freshfield Glacier.



Backcountry use in the park is unevenly distributed; the majority of visitors travel to only a few areas and do so on a limited number of weekends. Hiking and trail riding remain the most popular summer backcountry activities, but ski touring has increased in popularity as a winter activity, mostly on a day basis.

Banff National Park will continue to provide a wide range of high quality backcountry opportunities. The types and distribution of recreational opportunities available in Banff's backcountry will not change significantly but large tracts of land will be preserved with no man-made facilities except, possibly, for low-standard trails. In other areas, appropriate types of trails, campgrounds and roofed accommodation will be provided.

There are about 1,500 kilometres of designated trails in the park, plus an extensive but now redundant system of backcountry roads. Types of accommodation include three trail shelters, seven alpine huts, four commercial lodges and cabins, as well as a variety of backcountry group camps.

Most of the park's trails were neither planned nor designed for the types and levels of use they now receive. Problems are most acute in areas where intensive commercial horse outfitting occurs. However, the cost of physically upgrading all the substandard trails is prohibitive. The management plan addresses not only these problems but also establishes broad directions for the long-term management of backcountry areas in Banff.

The section of the North Saskatchewan River within the park has been designated a Canadian Heritage River, and is popular for canoeing, kayaking and rafting.

The major initiatives identified in this plan will ensure the protection of Zone II— Wilderness areas and will significantly improve the quality of visitor opportunities. Steps to be taken include improving the information on Banff's backcountry; physically improving trails, designated campgrounds, trail shelters and alpine huts; converting selected backcountry roads to multiple-use trail standard; permitting existing commercial lodges to redevelop and expand; reducing conflicts between horse-users and hikers; and coordinating the management of Banff's backcountry with adjacent backcountry areas.

Throughout this planning program, public comments have focused on both the need to reduce conflicts between horse-users and hikers and the need to upgrade the physical condition of many backcountry facilities, including trails, trail shelters, alpine huts and commercial lodges. Therefore, the plan gives special attention to each of these topics. In addressing horse/hiker conflicts, the plan provides for the development of separate campgrounds, the prohibition of horses from areas where severe trail damage is inevitable, and closer cooperation between park managers and operators of large group camps to reduce impacts on the environment and other park visitors. Backcountry visitor facilities will be upgraded primarily in those areas where environmental damage is the most severe and where the greatest number of visitors tend to congregate. No new shelters, huts and lodges will be provided.

Day-Use Facilities and Services

A broad range of day-use opportunities is provided in the park. These include roadside viewpoints, 28 picnic sites, and an extensive network of short trails and self-guiding interpretive trails. The park also provides a number of major day-use destinations, including Lake Minnewanka, Johnson Lake, upper Sulphur Mountain Hot Springs Pool and Gondola, the Buffalo (Bison) Paddock, Sunshine Meadows, Johnston Canyon, Lake Louise and Moraine Lake. In addition, commercially operated facilities and services include guiding services, livery operations, boat tours on Lake Minnewanka, canoe rentals and the park's three downhill ski areas.

Due to the special nature of ski areas in Banff National Park, a separate process has been established to produce long-range development plans for them. These plans provide the basis upon which ski area development takes place within predetermined boundaries as established in the leases.

Emphasis will be placed on upgrading existing facilities and services along park roads and along the Icefields, Bow Valley and Kootenay parkways. This will substantially improve the park experience of day visitors while minimizing the creation of additional site disturbances. Picnic sites and viewpoints along the Trans-Canada Highway between the town of Banff and Lake Louise will be removed and the demand for these opportunities will be redirected to the Bow Valley Parkway. The Trans-Canada Highway will be managed as a through-traffic transportation corridor.

The Sulphur Mountain Upper Hotsprings pool is among the most popular day-use facilities in the park. Although the facility receives over 360,000 visits each year, annual use has decreased by 25 per cent since 1981. It will now be redeveloped so that it becomes a more attractive visitor destination. *A variety of improvements will also be considered for the Lake Minnewanka area.* Efforts will be directed to solving its traffic congestion and parking problems, providing improved access for disabled persons, better marina facilities and increasing its role as a water-based day-use area.

The bison paddock, just north of the town of Banff, will be retained, viewing opportunities improved and an expanded program of public education offered. The size of the paddock will be reduced and the fence modified so that it does not impede the movement of elk and deer through that portion of the Bow Valley.

The future of Johnson Lake generated considerable public debate following the failure of a dam at its outlet in February 1986. Residents of the town of Banff, in particular, valued the lake as a local swimming spot. Accordingly, the water at the lake will be restored to its level prior to the dam failure.

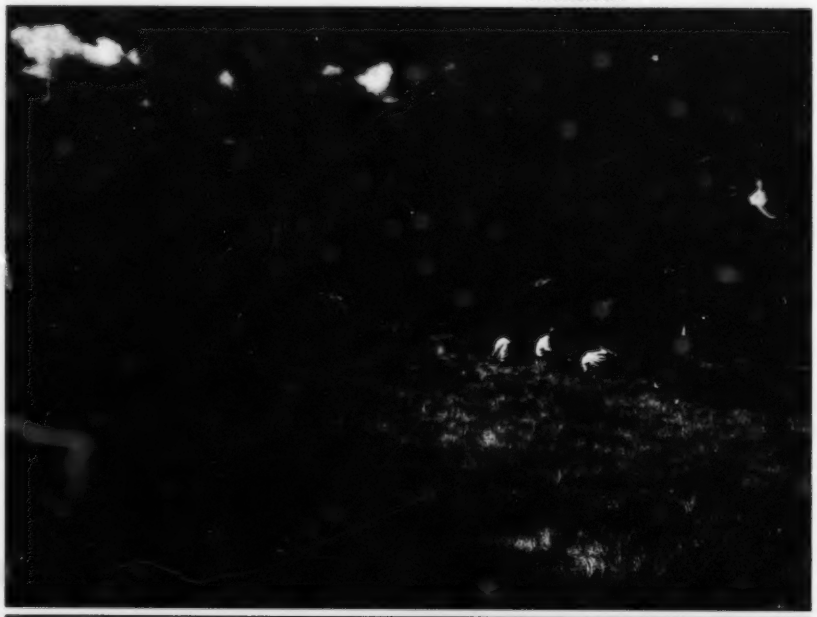
The development of new ski areas and golf courses will not be permitted.

Recreational Activities

Banff National Park provides opportunities for a wide range of recreational activities: driving for pleasure; cross-country skiing; canoeing, kayaking and rafting; lake boating; bicycling; horseback riding; caving; dog-sledding and scuba diving. Most recreational activities are associated with road-accessible areas and campgrounds. Backcountry day-use is also popular. The private sector also contributes substantially to visitor enjoyment by providing commercial services such as guided raft tours, horse rentals, golfing, dog-sledding trips, bicycle and boat rentals, plus guiding services for mountaineering, trail riding and fishing.

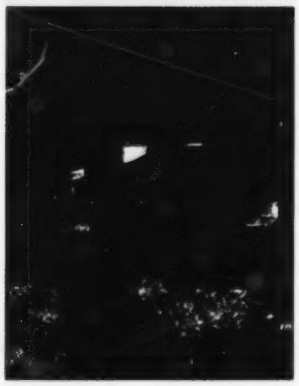
Direction is provided in the management plan for improving the quality of recreational opportunities in the park while more fully considering the needs of visitors of differing ages, skills, interests and physical abilities. Important aspects of this initiative will be the development of improved information about recreational opportunities and the reduction of conflicts between hikers, horseback riders and off-pavement bicyclists.

Horse-hiker conflicts will be resolved through facility upgrading, trail separation and education.



The park will continue to provide a wide range of cross-country skiing opportunities. Recreational opportunities for canoeing, kayaking and rafting will be enhanced. Launching and pull-out sites, portages and signing and information brochures will be developed as required. An information package will also be prepared for the North Saskatchewan River explaining the natural, historic and recreational attributes which led to its designation as a Canadian Heritage River.

Bicycling has become an increasingly popular activity in recent years. The Canadian Parks Service will continue to support the Icefields Parkway as an international-calibre bicycle touring route. Elsewhere in the park, off-road use will continue to be permitted on designated trails. In addition, the environmental feasibility of a bicycle trail linking the western end of Vermilion Lakes Drive and the Bow Valley Parkway will be investigated.

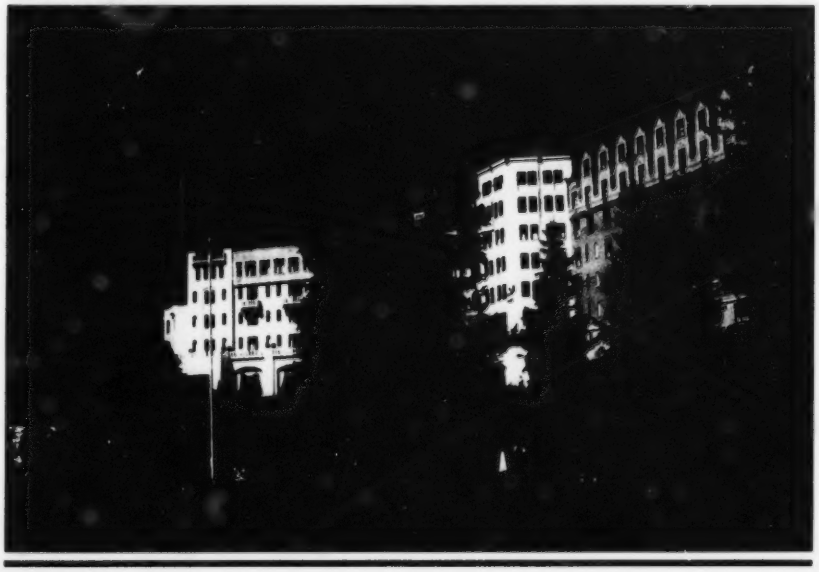


Camping.

The existing range and distribution of visitor accommodation facilities will be retained.

No single topic generated as much public comment during the Banff planning program as horse use. Public concerns have generally focused on the need to reduce trail damage and conflicts with other visitors. The large commercially-outfitted horse camps were a particular concern. The plan accepts the existing patterns and levels of use for livery operations, outfitters and private horse parties, but provides direction for resolving long-standing problems. For example, grazing and camping with horses will not be permitted in the Redearth-Egypt Lake and Paradise-Taylor backcountry areas. Moreover, the Canadian Parks Service will no longer undertake extensive trail upgrading to support their primary use by commercial horse outfitters. In a number of cases it will be more cost-effective to let horses continue to use an impaired section of a trail and to develop a standard hiking trail around that impaired section for park visitors on foot. However, the Canadian Parks Service will continue to respond to the needs of private horse users by developing separate campgrounds, providing hitching rails and corrals where required and upgrading information on equestrian etiquette and proper use of horse trails for minimum environmental impact.

Chateau Lake Louise.



Frontcountry Accommodation

Park visitor accommodation is primarily found in the town of Banff and the Lake Louise Visitor Centre. The amount and nature of the accommodation available at Lake Louise is governed by the 1981 *Lake Louise Development Guidelines*. The future provision of accommodation in the town of Banff will be handled in the town planning program presently underway.

In addition, the park contains facilities that are generally more rustic and provide more direct opportunities for visitors to experience the park's natural environment: 14 campgrounds, three overflow campgrounds, one group tenting area, six hostels and ten outlying commercial accommodation facilities (OCAs).

The existing types and distribution of visitor accommodation will be retained, but no new campgrounds, hostels or OCAs will be developed. A variety of steps will be taken to increase the enjoyment of visitors staying at these facilities:

1) undertaking or encouraging the upgrading of accommodation facilities;

2) developing facilities such as trails and interpretive displays in association with these facilities;

3) minimizing their visual and environmental impact; and

4) improving the quality of information available at these facilities about the park's outdoor recreational opportunities, facilities and services.

Except in the Banff townsite area, many of the existing campgrounds will be permitted to expand if warranted by the demand for their use. No expansion of campgrounds in the Banff townsite area will occur, however, because of the environmental significance of the lower Bow Valley and the considerable level of existing campground development.

Hostels will continue to be recognized as important facilities in the park. The Hilda Creek hostel will be redeveloped and expanded and the Corral Creek hostel will be removed once a hostelling facility is developed in the Lake Louise Visitor Centre. The proposed removal of the Spray hostel met with considerable concern from members of the public who valued its natural setting and rustic character. The initial reason for recommending its removal was related to the proposal to close the Spray backcountry road to all vehicular traffic. Although the Canadian Hostelling Association and Canadian Parks Service reached an agreement that would allow the hostel to continue to operate without vehicle access; the Hostelling Association subsequently decided that the hostel is no longer required. The hostel has therefore been removed.

The park's OCAs may expand in a manner and to density levels consistent with guidelines established by the Canadian Parks Service.

Access

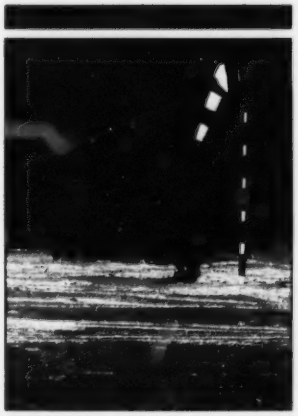
Two national transportation corridors follow the Bow Valley from the park's east gate to its boundary with Yoho National Park: the Trans-Canada Highway (TCH) and the Canadian Pacific Railway mainline. The TCH is currently being upgraded from two to four lanes between the east gate and Lake Louise. In addition, there are 11 park roads located outside the town of Banff and the Lake Louise Visitor Centre.

There are three notable parkways in Banff. The Icefields Parkway is known internationally because of its spectacular scenery. However, the numerous abandoned road alignments and borrow pits along this route are inappropriate for a parkway of this international stature. Therefore, these sites will be rehabilitated. The Bow Valley Parkway is also being upgraded to a standard consistent with its parkway designation. Once completed, it should absorb much of the slower park traffic now using the Trans-Canada Highway. A short section of the Kootenay Parkway is also located in the park; initiatives related to this parkway are identified in the Kootenay Park Management Plan.

Along all park roads and the TCH, a priority will be placed on rehabilitating roadside disturbances, maximizing road safety and minimizing wildlife mortality. Highway 1A west of Lake Louise will be upgraded to a parkway standard. Options for the future of Vermilion Lakes Drive received considerable public comment. The plan provides for the retention of this road as a slow speed, dead-end route in order to protect its natural scenic values.

All backcountry roads in the park will be closed to vehicular use including use by Canadian Parks Service staff and park outfitters. Sections of the Redearth, Brewster, Cascade and Spray roads will be converted to an appropriate trail standard. The Sulphur Mountain summit road is a high-profile scar visible to eastbound travellers on the Trans-Canada Highway, and steps will be taken to reduce its visibility.

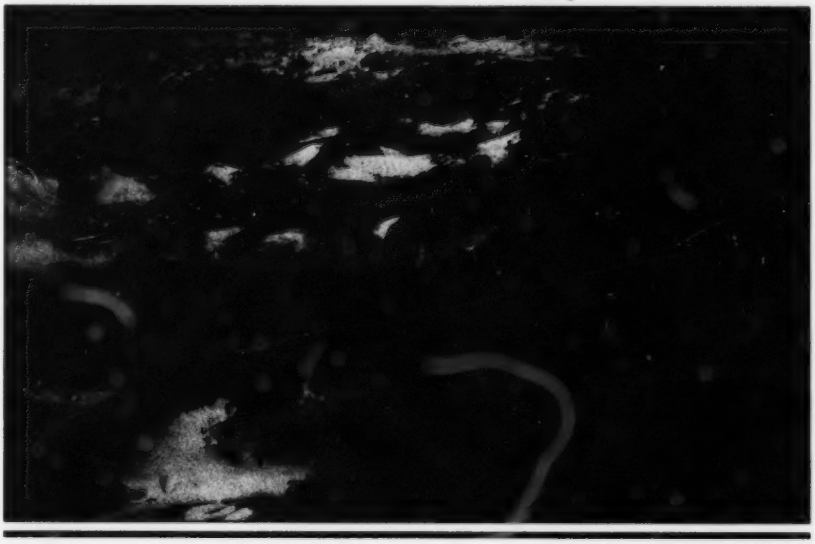
The Banff airstrip will be retained only if there is a demonstrated need for emergency landing and diversionary purposes. This use will be monitored over the next three years, and then a decision will be made as to whether or not it will be retained for these purposes. Minimal facilities will be provided.



Banff Airstrip.

Use of the Banff Airstrip for emergency/ diversionary landing purposes will be monitored for a three year period.

Efforts are directed toward rehabilitating disturbed areas along the Icefields Parkway.



Lake Louise Visitor Centre

The present program of redeveloping facilities and services in the Lake Louise Visitor Centre will help make the area a high quality tourist destination. The level of development in the visitor centre will be restricted to the "low-growth option" selected for the area as the result the 1981 Lake Louise planning program. Such development is intended to allow visitors to better enjoy the park and is now nearing the end of its implementation phase. The obvious needs for visitor and residential services and facilities have already been addressed and the development projects, both private and public, should be complete by 1989, at which time a review of their effectiveness will be necessary.

The Visitor Centre will continue to function as:

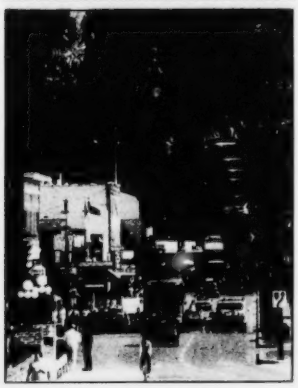
1) a major day-use destination,

2) a centre providing limited visitor goods and services for day-users and for up to 3500 overnight guests,

3) an operational and minor administrative centre for the park,

4) a major interpretive and information centre for the park, and

5) a limited residential community for those who need to reside within the park.



The management plan sets parameters for the planning and management of the town.

The Town of Banff

The town of Banff has a population of about 7,000 year-round residents. The existing hotel and motel units can accommodate up to 10,200 overnight visitors.

The town of Banff will remain the focus for visitor services and associated developments in Banff National Park. Due to its location in the montane life zone which provides critical wildlife habitat, the town will continue to have a compact character. The town plan will define the boundary so as to reflect this natural resource sensitivity, as well to as address the future redevelopment of existing commercial lands and the consequent requirement for residential development and community services. The town will define an ultimate limit to the growth of the town of Banff in terms of the range and level of visitor facilities it can provide. The difficult task of achieving these diverse needs is not a typical problem for town planning in most Canadian communities. It reflects the special challenge of creating a town environment in an internationally renowned national park. The challenge can only be met if the town plan seeks out and rewards innovative approaches to land use and development. It will require the commitment of not only the Canadian Parks Service, but also town residents and business people.

The town of Banff will continue to function as:

1) a centre to provide accommodation and other goods and services to visitors,

2) a major interpretive and information centre for both this park and the rest of the national park system,

3) the park's administrative and operational centre, and

4) a residential community for those with a need to reside in the park.

Although the original intention had been to do so, the park management plan does not include a detailed town boundary due to the complexity of the issue and time needed to make the final determination. Environmental considerations and infrastructure limitations make it difficult to expand the boundary. The final delineation will include the existing contiguous built-up and sub-divided areas, including facilities on Tunnel Mountain. Additional lands to be included within the town boundary are those already designated for development, and such other limited lands as are essential to provide critical residential needs and to meet the existing shortfall.

Funding has been set aside for the construction of a new sewage treatment system. Final determination of the requirement for and precise location of a second Banff bridge will occur through subsequent studies.

Communication Services

Communication services are critical to the successful management of Banff National Park. The plan contains guidelines for communication services in four separate categories.

First, visitors and potential visitors must be aware of the kinds of facilities, services and recreational opportunities that are available in the park as well as in the surrounding region. Initiatives will be taken to inform the general public and potential visitors of the role of the national parks system and Banff's significance within it. Many other government agencies and tourism organizations market and promote the park. The Canadian Parks Service will assist them in their efforts by ensuring that accurate and up-to-date information is available.

Second, visitors need more detailed information about the park once they arrive. This information is now provided at the Banff and Lake Louise information centres, at the park administration office and also by trailhead and highway signs, Canadian Parks Service brochures, Canadian Parks Service staff and local commercial operators. Steps will be taken to improve information on backcountry, roadside, day-use and outdoor recreational opportunities and accommodation facilities.

Major initiatives are proposed to improve the availability and quality of park visitor information. A visitor information facility will be located near the park's eastern entrance to provide information for westbound visitors destined to various areas in the park and the four mountain parks in general. The Banff information centre will be redeveloped to serve as a first class information and interpretive centre. A visitor reception centre will also be developed at Lake Louise to provide both interpretive and basic visitor information.

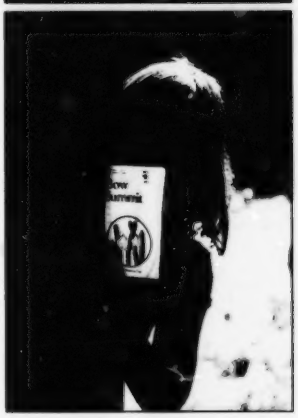
Third, one role of the Canadian Parks Service is to make visitors aware of the special resources that the parks protect and preserve, the techniques used to manage and protect these resources, and environmentally appropriate ways to visit and use the parks. This type of information is now provided in Banff National Park through a variety of interpretive services at sites along the Icefields Parkway and at attractions such as the Cave and Basin. Evening campground talks and nature walks are also offered. Interpretive services in the park will be further improved, expanded at popular sites, and better integrated with those in the other mountain national parks.

Fourth, opportunities will be expanded for the public to become more involved through volunteer programs, cooperative agreements and the establishment of a cooperative association. Public involvement through planning programs will continue.

Support Facilities

A variety of facilities have been established either to support the management and operation of Banff National Park or to serve functions not directly related to the park. This latter category includes the TransAlta dam, canals and generating facilities at Lake Minnewanka. In the first category are the administrative facilities for the frontcountry, located at Saskatchewan River Crossing, Lake Louise, Castle Junction and the Banff townsite region. Where feasible, administrative facilities have been concentrated at these few locations, rather than dispersed along the park's road and highway corridors. The Banff Warden Service also maintains a support system of backcountry patrol cabins.

The plan contains direction for a number of initiatives related to support facilities. The park gate on the David Thompson Highway will be improved and the Canadian Parks Service's operational and accommodation facilities at Saskatchewan River Crossing will be redeveloped. A number of redundant facilities located in an area along the northern periphery of the town of Banff will be removed and the sites restored to a more natural condition. These facilities include the laboratory formerly used by the Canadian Wildlife Service and all miscellaneous buildings north of Hawk Street and beyond the fenced perimeter of the park's maintenance compound.



More and improved interpretive opportunities will be provided at major visitor attractions.

The TransAlta penstock, water tower and generating station east of the town of Banff are high profile structures; the penstock is also a significant barrier to the movement of elk and deer. The Canadian Parks Service will, therefore, work with TransAlta to reduce the impact of these structures until they are eventually replaced.

All facilities and structures in Banff National Park contribute to the total impact of human presence on the environment. Guidelines will be developed to minimize their visual impact and to ensure that natural features, not man-made structures, are dominant.

The Sunshine Meadows program involves the Canadian Parks Service, province of British Columbia and the private sector.

Regional Integration

Banff National Park cannot be planned and managed in isolation from the regions which surround it and the Canadian Parks Service will continue to be a good neighbour. This plan contains initiatives designed to produce mutually acceptable economic, social and environmental impacts on the park as well as on adjacent provincial Crown Lands and communities.

Many of the issues requiring integrated and cooperative programs with regional interests have been identified already. These issues are resource management (notably wildlife and forest management), the provision of outdoor recreational opportunities, and the development of integrated information services and marketing programs for the park and adjacent areas.

The Canadian Parks Service will work towards a better understanding of park visitors and their patterns of use, and will share this and other information with local and regional businesses and organizations to assist them in their planning. Due to the important role of Banff National Park as a major tourist attraction in Western Canada, the Canadian Parks Service will work with local, regional and provincial organizations in developing approaches to further enhance its tourism role.

The most obvious need for regional co-operation occurs in the case of the town of Banff and the other communities in the Bow Valley Corridor. The Canadian Parks Service relies on the neighbouring community of Canmore for a variety of needed services and housing opportunities. In turn, Banff's international reputation helps draw tourists to these services and provides a variety of economic benefits to Canmore residents. Limits to the expansion of the Banff town boundary will have an important effect on the town of Canmore and the entire Bow Valley Corridor in general. The Canadian Parks Service will try to plan and administer the town of Banff so that it functions as a municipal entity that is fully integrated with other urban centres in the Bow Valley Corridor.

In addition, the Canadian Parks Service will cooperate with Alberta and British Columbia in regional planning and the achievement of mutually acceptable goals.

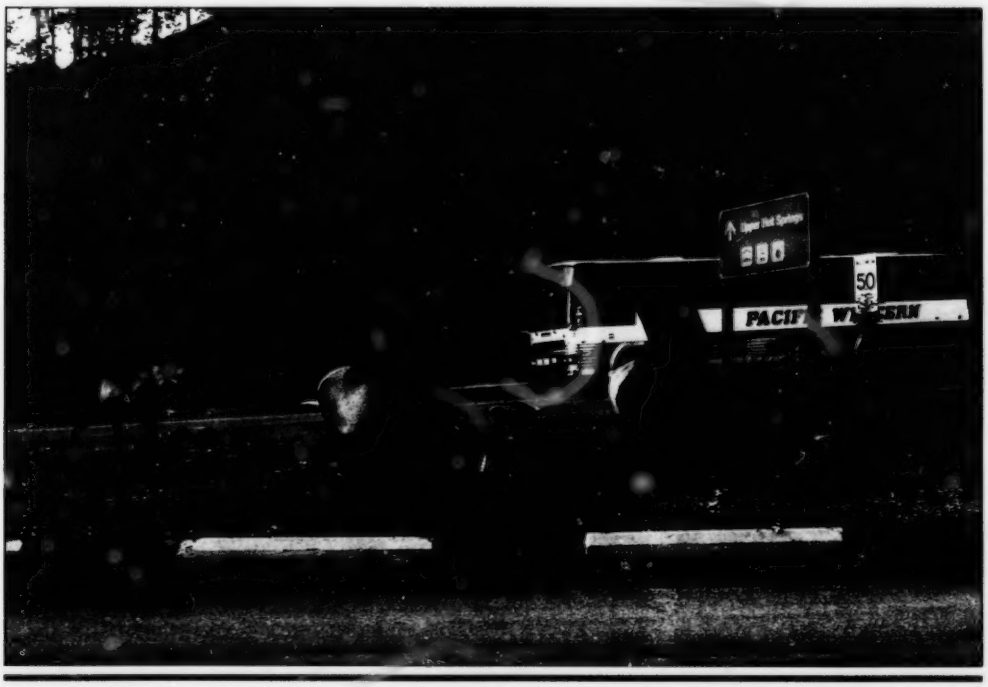
4 ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

The Canadian Parks Service, as a federal agency, complies fully with the requirements of the Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process. It has an additional responsibility as a conservation agency to ensure that the environmental effects of its actions are assessed, minimized and, where possible, avoided.

The environmental assessment and review process has been applied at various stages throughout the management planning program. The *Planning Options* (1983) were analyzed to determine their environmental effects, the *Banff Core Concept* (1986) was reviewed to assess its environmental impacts and an overall environmental assessment of this park management plan has been prepared. The results are reported in the full version of the *Banff Park Management Plan.*

The Canadian Parks Service also follows guidelines requiring the assessment of the social and economic implications of its plans. Accordingly, a socio-economic review has been conducted as part of the planning program and the results are also contained in the Plan.

The assessments were designed to ensure that environmental and social implications were considered during the development of the plan guidelines. The assessment procedure emphasizes the identification and reduction (or mitigation) of the adverse impact of plan initiatives on resources or significant ecological and social issues. This procedure results in the identification of knowledge gaps, potential impacts, mitigating measures and monitoring and research requirements. In addition, the results provide the basis for more detailed future assessments at the project implementation stage.



The mitigation of past and current impacts, particularly in Montane areas, is a priority.

5 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Priorities for implementing the various initiatives are identified in the full version of the management plan. This implementation will be dependent upon the availability of financial resources, demonstrated visitor demand and the findings of detailed environmental assessments.

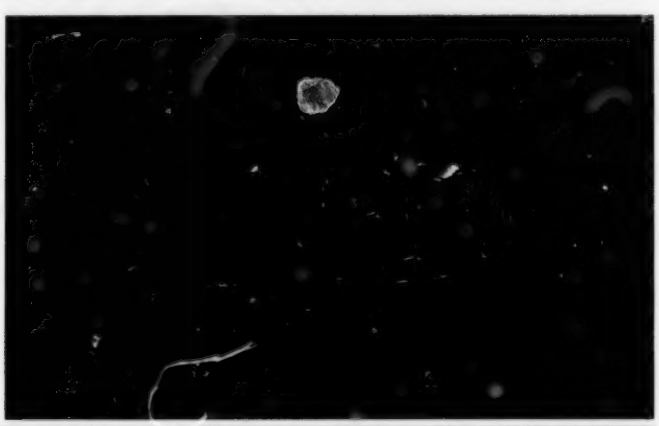
Restrictions are attached to the redevelopment and expansion of existing facilities not operated by the Canadian Parks Service. The limits for redevelopment and expansion for such facilities are specified not only by the guidelines associated with the plan but also by the terms and conditions listed in current agreements with lessees, licensees or concessionaires.

The direction contained in this plan is consistent with the provisions of the *National Parks Act*, *Parks Policy* and *In Trust for Tomorrow: A Management Framework for Four Mountain Parks*. Although the plan has a 15 year time frame it is scheduled for review every five years or earlier. In this way, adjustments can be made should conditions change substantially or if significant new information becomes available.

Mount Victoria.

Nature Appreciation. Castle Mountain.

The initiatives in the Banff National Park Management Plan are directed to preserving the park's heritage values for future generations.



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